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Memorandum of Conversation

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Date: 8/21/76	

DATE: May 31, 1974
TIME: 1:00 p.m.
PLACE: Madison/Monroe Dining Room

SUBJECT: Secretary's Luncheon Meeting with Outside Experts

PARTICIPANTS: Philip Handler, President, National Academy
of Sciences
Eugene Skolnikoff, Director of Center for
International Studies, MIT
Richard Gardner, Professor of International
Law, Columbia University Law School
Hans Landsberg, head of the resources and energy
office of Resources for the Future, Inc.
Richard Cooper, Professor of Economics,
Yale University
Lester Brown, Director, Global Interdependence
Project, Overseas Development Council
The Secretary
Mr. Parker, AID Administrator
Mr. Sisco
Mr. Lord
Mr. ~~Enders~~
Mr. Boeker, S/P (note-taker)

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MR. GARDNER: It is very good of you to keep this luncheon
appointment with us; we are surprised and delighted.

THE SECRETARY: There was just not another good day for
some time, and I wanted to have this discussion. I have
made this UN Speech. It reflects that sometimes the best
way to make policy is to announce it and then see what
needs to be done to implement it. I have announced that
we are willing to do something and I am willing to ram it
through the government if we have a good program. Winston,
how would you like to proceed?

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MR. LORD: I asked each of our guests to look at your UN Speech and to consider what are the implications of some recent events. The question is how we should now move out, with the UN Speech as a starting point but not confining our discussion to that framework.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to food policy.]

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MR. BROWN: Quite simply, we have a trend of rising food prices and this has led to a reversal, for the first time, of the trends of declining death rates and improving nutrition. I feel that a global strategy must be based on a shift in emphasis from increasing supply to reducing demand -- most centrally population growth. Our standing predictions on population growth are no longer possible. Something has to give, the birth rate or the death rate.

THE SECRETARY: I wanted to use this meeting to see how you see these new issues. Watergate or not this Administration has to turn to the task of handing over the job to others. By that time we can at least define the issues. We can get going by defining what the problems are and what are the directions in which we should be moving. I would like to get together on this, during the week of June 19-25. Can you (Mr. Lord) set this up? Will two hours do it?

MR. BROWN: Yes. We (Handler and Brown) have a group that will be ready with something by then.

THE SECRETARY: You (Mr. Handler) can get a group set up on science and technology questions for a session around the end of July.

MR. GARDNER: One other thing I would like to mention is the UN Population Conference in August.

THE SECRETARY: Frankly I'm not sure I knew there was one.

MR. GARDNER: If you indicate a desire to go, it will change the whole thing. For example, the Soviets will have to recognize this problem.

THE SECRETARY: Who is coming to the Conference?

MR. GARDNER: That's still unclear.

THE SECRETARY: Who are we planning to send? (Turning to Mr. Enders) Are you confirmed yet?

MR. ENDERS: No, so I can't go.

MR. GARDNER: The point is population is important and we have to do what we do on this question in a multilateral framework.

THE SECRETARY: What do we want to do?

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MR. GARDNER: I have brought along a written proposal which I will leave. First we want each country to set a population target; only a handful have done so. The urgency is not recognized. For example, when I talked to the Algerians, they shrugged off the problem by asserting that Algeria could support double its present population. They seemed shocked when I told them the demographic mathematics were such that they needed to start new programs yesterday if their objective was to keep their population from going much beyond double the present level. Second, we want an obligation on each country to report to the UN what it is doing.

THE SECRETARY: Who is handling this in the Department?

MR. ENDERS: Phil Claxton.

THE SECRETARY: Someone said there is a NSSM on Population.

MR. LORD: We are doing this and it should be completed shortly.

MR. GARDNER: The third thing we need is a strategy for reducing fertility -- to include action on women's rights, jobs, education and economic development.

MR. SKOLNIKOFF: The last point is the important one.

MR. BROWN: That's right. Historically birth rates have declined only where standards of living are rising so that personal security is established apart from having children. The problem is reproducing out of desperation.

THE SECRETARY: How do you reproduce out of desperation?

MR. HANDLER: With high infant mortality you have many children to assure that some are around later to do the work and take care of you. But returning to the broader issue, the specter that bothers me is that we might provide just enough food aid to keep people alive but not to raise their level of nutrition and standard of living.

MR. PARKER: We are proposing that food aid be accompanied by conditions in the population field.

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MR. HANDLER: How do you do that internationally without appearing racist? You have to convince the LDCs that population control is in their interest not ours.

MR. BROWN: One problem is that the United States is among those many countries that does not have a population target.

MR. HANDLER: We could get one merely by making explicit what we know is going to happen anyway.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to food policy.]

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